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## THE COSMOPOLITAN ASPECT OF THE HEBREW WISDOM<sup>1</sup>.

THE Hebrew Wisdom, though it has been a distinct subject of investigation for more than fifty years, has still its unsettled problems; and of these there are perhaps two of paramount importance at the present time. The first is the question of the age in which this remarkable movement flourished. The prevalent opinion has been that the Wisdom belongs to no one age in particular. It has been viewed as a permanent bent or aptitude of the Hebrew mind, operative throughout almost the entire history of the nation, and throwing off its literary productions at widely separated stages of its development. Originating in the time of Solomon, it is supposed to have been carried forward by a succession of Sages or Wise Men, who were ultimately incorporated as a regular teaching profession or guild. From this circle of thinkers there emanated the various writings which we group together under the title of the *Hokmah* literature:—first, perhaps, the Proverbs of Solomon, next the Book of Job, and lastly—as works born out of due time—the late post-Exilic books of Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus.

Of late years, however, another view has been gaining ground. The tendency of recent criticism has been to draw together the separate remains of *Hokmah* writing within a comparatively narrow compass of time; and to assign the composition of Job, of the Proverbs, of Ecclesi-

<sup>1</sup> The first of two lectures delivered at the Summer School of Theology, Edinburgh, 1904. The second lecture will be published in a later number of the *J. Q. R.*

astes and Ecclesiasticus to one stage in the history of Jewish religion. Just as we can speak of a golden age of prophecy, or an age of legalism, or an age of Apocalyptic, so it is thought there may have been a period which was pre-eminently the age of the Wisdom,—an age when its peculiar mode of thinking was in the ascendant, and when it formed a vital contribution to the development of Judaism. If that theory is to be entertained, there can obviously be no question about the particular time to which the movement is to be assigned. It must have been the age immediately preceding the Maccabean rebellion,—that great upheaval which by universal acknowledgment divides post-Exilic Judaism into two entirely dissimilar phases. On the very eve of that conflict Jesus ben-Sira lived and wrote: Ecclesiastes certainly cannot be much earlier; and the two remaining books must then be assigned to a date considerably earlier indeed, but still within the middle period of post-Exilic history. Thus, from about the year 180 B. C., backwards for perhaps two centuries, is the period which would have to be considered the golden age of the Hebrew Wisdom. And there is no doubt that within that tract of time there were influences at work which might be very closely related to the spirit of the Wisdom movement. There was, for example, the transference of religious interest from the Temple-cultus to the study of the written law, and the rise of the scribe to a position of rivalry with the priesthood. There was the substitution of the Church for the State as the basis of religious fellowship; and accompanying that the translation of the theocratic conceptions of the prophets into terms of personal religion, and the elaboration of an ethical code suitable for the individual life. These are internal changes which *must* have been in progress during the interval between Ezra and the Maccabees; and it can readily be seen that the process was one in which the conceptions of the *Hokmah* were fitted to play an influential part. Besides all this there was the presence of

Hellenic culture, which is not unnaturally supposed to have had some share in the formation of the peculiar type of thought represented by the Wisdom. I think it is not at all surprising that keen students of the Jewish Wisdom should be attracted to this period of history as affording an explanation of some of the characteristic features of that many-sided and interesting literature.

Now, touching on this question at many points, but fundamentally independent of it, is the other unsettled problem to which I referred. It may be stated generally thus: Was the Wisdom purely a native product of Israelitish life and thought, unalloyed with foreign elements; or was it influenced to any degree by movements of a similar character in other countries? The latter alternative, of course, may cover a wide range of possibilities. It might amount to nothing more than the admission of a casual and sporadic influence exerted on the development of the Wisdom from without, and revealing itself in certain subordinate features of the system. Or it might mean that the Wisdom of the Old Testament was simply the Hebrew phase of a great international movement of thought, deriving its energy from intellectual impulses not peculiar to the religion of revelation, but common to the civilized races of the East. Between these extremes any number of intermediate positions might be assumed, each of which would justify us in speaking of a cosmopolitan aspect of the Hebrew Wisdom. This, then, is the class of questions to which I am now to direct your attention. And before entering on the discussion of them, I will try to express in few words where I conceive the true importance of the inquiry to lie, and how I have been led to think of it at all.

Any one who has followed recent developments of theological research must have been struck by the rise of a somewhat novel application of the comparative method to the problems of historical theology. We have long been familiar with the science of Comparative Religion

as a handmaid of theology. We have come to know much of the great faiths of the world; and have learned to study them reverently and dispassionately, as sincere and not wholly unrewarded efforts to solve the enigmas of existence and meet the deepest need of the human soul. We have learned also to compare them one with another and estimate their relative worth; and in the comparison we have found a proof of the intrinsic and immeasurable superiority of the religion of the Bible. But for the most part we have proceeded on the tacit assumption that the ethnic religions can be handled as separate and independent entities, dwelling apart, each within its own sphere of influence, and developing its own genius without much help or interference from without. At least we have been accustomed to look on the religion of Israel as an entirely isolated fact of history. Now the new point of view to which I have alluded involves the negation of this assumption. It is denied that the religions of antiquity were thus secluded from each other's influence; it is maintained on the contrary that, through the common medium of a vast and immemorial civilization, they had acted on and interpenetrated each other to an extent that has hardly as yet been dreamed of. In the later pre-Christian ages especially it is held that the interchange of religious ideas went on with astonishing rapidity; and that the effects are to be seen in the dissolution of the old bond between religion and the state, in the rise of new religious fellowships, the amalgamation of divine names, and the diffusion of similar customs and beliefs over the whole surface of the Oriental world. From this process of syncretism Judaism was least of all exempt. While the most conservative of all faiths, it was at the same time the most receptive; and from all quarters,—from Babylonia, from Persia, from Egypt, and from Greece,—it drew much of the material imbedded in its later theological constructions. In the language of one writer, Judaism was the alembic into which was thrown the heterogeneous deposit of many

phases of religious speculation; and from which was to emerge, under the name of Christianity, a sort of sublimated essence of the religious consciousness of the race. Such, in crude outline, appears to be the view of things common to theologians like Gunkel and Bousset, of Assyriologists like Zimmern and Winckler, and a historian like Eduard Meyer; not to mention more extreme developments of the theory in the recent utterances of Friedrich Delitzsch and the writings of the Abbé Loisy. The claim of the Bible to be the revelation of the perfect religion would thus have to be based, not so much on its self-contained superiority to all other sacred literatures, but rather on its capacity for assimilating what was best in the religions around and utilizing the results of the highest human thought as the vehicle of its peculiar message to mankind.

Now the inquiry into the external affinities of the Hebrew Wisdom is a special and restricted case of this far-reaching investigation. The cosmopolitan character of the movement has been emphasized by Gunkel and Bousset; and both have found in this fact a confirmation of the soundness of their main thesis. The former in particular has indicated certain specific channels of communication between the Wisdom movement in Israel and parallel phenomena in other countries. And it seemed to me that it might be worth while to follow out these hints carefully and arrive, if possible, at some definite judgment on the evidence within this limited sphere. The results, I admit, have not been very decisive; but such as they are I will now endeavour to put them before you.

The subject may be approached from two sides: first, from the side of the Old Testament itself; and secondly, from the side of foreign systems which are thought to present points of contact with it.

## I.

I begin, then, by observing that the Old Testament betrays the consciousness of a certain international significance attaching to the Wisdom tradition. There are several passages which prove that the quality so highly esteemed in Israel under that name was not regarded as an exclusive possession of the Hebrew people. In the account of Solomon's wisdom in 1 Kings iv. 29-31, we read that "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding very much, and breadth of mind, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about." Ethan and Heman and Calcol and Darda are as yet unknown personages, though it is at least possible they were non-Israelites; but Egypt and the sons of the East are perfectly understood designations; and the fact that this foreign wisdom could be compared with the wisdom for which Solomon was famous shows clearly that it was considered of the same quality as his, however far he may have surpassed them. But Solomon was not only a wise king; he was also regarded as the patron of the later literary Wisdom and the schools from which it proceeded; hence we may perhaps infer that the comparison of *his* wisdom to that of the East and Egypt implies the recognition of an essential affinity between the whole body of Hebrew Wisdom and the parallel developments which certainly existed among the neighbouring peoples. Of these countries, Edom appears to have enjoyed a special reputation for wise men and wisdom down to the latest ages of the monarchy. In Jer. xlix. 7, the scornful question, "Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?" obviously implies that the fame of the Temanite wisdom was traditional; and the same inference may be drawn from the threat in the eighth verse

of Obadiah: "In that day I will destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mount of Esau." These allusions are amply sufficient to prove a knowledge of the existence of foreign wisdom on the part of Old Testament writers; though of course they say nothing of actual influence or intercourse on either side.

A more positive argument might perhaps be based on some facts of the *Hokmah* writings. There are two well-known sections of the book of Proverbs which appear at least to be assigned to foreign sources,—the words of Agur the son of Jakeh (xxx. 1), and those of Lemuel, king of Massa (xxxi. 1). The text of the superscriptions is no doubt uncertain, and the meaning almost hopelessly obscure. But in the second case I hardly think that any of the emendations proposed has as much claim to respect as the simple construction of the Massoretic text, that Lemuel was a king of an Ishmaelite tribe of Massa. The other title is less decisive, but even there there is a presumption that a non-Israelite origin is suggested. It is possible of course that this is merely a literary invention, and that the contents are purely Hebrew or Jewish; but even the fact that a Jewish writer could put them in the mouths of foreign sages counts for something in favour of the international character of the movement<sup>1</sup>. Still more striking is the

<sup>1</sup> Here, for want of another opportunity, I may just call attention to a remarkable series of *Indian* parallels which Mr. Jacobs has pointed out in Prov. xxx (*Studies in Biblical Archaeology*, p. 125 f.):—

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Who has gone up to heaven and<br>come down?            | Who knows or who here can<br>declare                          |
| Who has gathered the wind in<br>his fists?                | Whence has sprung—whence this<br>creation—                    |
| Who has bound up the waters in<br>a garment?              | From what this creation arose,<br>Whether any made it or not? |
| Who has established all the ends<br>of the earth?         | He who in the highest heaven is<br>its ruler,                 |
| What is his name, and what his<br>son's, if thou knowest? | He verily knows, or even he<br>knows not!                     |

(*Rig-veda*, X, 129.)



case of the book of Job, where the facts are fortunately not in dispute. That the hero of that great poem is a non-Israelite, that the scene is laid outside the Holy Land, that all the human personages of the drama are Edomites or Arabs of the eastern deserts, are circumstances which taken together, and taken along with some rather remarkable Arabisms in the language, are perhaps barely appreciated in the ordinary theories of the composition of the book. To speak of the book (with Renan) as an echo of the ancient wisdom of Teman, or to say that it is not more specially Hebrew than Idumean or Ishmaelite, may be a romantic extravagance; and to suppose that it is a translation into Hebrew of a work originally written in another tongue is a view which does not require serious refutation. But avoiding these extremes, and allowing that the background and atmosphere of the poem belong to the art of the writer, we have still to ask why his sense of artistic fitness took this particular turn. It must surely mean, at the very least, that the author wished to present the pro-

15. The horseleech has three daughters,  
 they say alway, Give, give.  
 There are three things never sated,  
 Yea, four that never say, Enough:  
 Sheol is never sated with dead,  
 Nor the womb's gate with men,  
 Earth is never sated with water,  
 And fire says never, Enough.

Fire is never sated with fuel,  
 Nor Ocean with the streams,  
 Nor the god of death with all creatures,  
 Nor the bright-eyed one with men.  
 (Pants., I, str. 153.)

18. There be three things too wonderful for me,  
 Yea, four which I know not:  
 The way of an eagle in the air . . .  
 The way of a ship through the sea.

The path of ships across the sea,  
 The soaring eagle's flight Varuna knows.

(Rig-veda.)

&c.

&c.

None of these might be very impressive by itself; but taken altogether from a single chapter, and that chapter ostensibly of foreign origin, they do create a presumption in favour of Mr. Jacobs's suggestion, that Prov. xxx consists of fragments of Indian Wisdom which had made their way into Palestine by way of Arabia.

blem which exercised his mind as a problem of universal religion, and not a difficulty arising from the special revelation given to Israel. Whether we can go further and infer that he knew such matters to be the theme of discussion amongst wise men of the East, is just the point at issue; and it is one very difficult to determine. On first thoughts one is inclined to say that the problem of the moral government of the universe could only arise on the soil of a strictly monotheistic faith; but that is a matter on which it is easy to be too confident. Through all the more developed religions of antiquity, polytheistic though they are on the surface, there runs a strain of monotheistic reflection; and we have no right to say beforehand that this could not be sufficiently earnest to create difficulties regarding the distribution of providential rewards and punishments in this world. As a matter of fact, there exists an Egyptian papyrus, of late date, in which this very question of the righteousness of the world-government is discussed with much heat and acrimony between a great cat and a small jackal, representing doubtless two deities of the Egyptian pantheon. It illustrates the possibility of discussing the theodicy on a basis of superficial polytheism; and that may be accepted as a proof that this grave difficulty could be felt outside the pale of revealed religion. While, therefore, we must hold that the book of Job is "the genuine outcome of the religious life and thought of Israel," and its author a true son of Israel, we may believe that the setting of the poem was due to his knowledge of the higher thought of the neighbouring peoples; and that this knowledge made the scene chosen attractive to the writer himself and suggestive to his readers.

There is one general feature of the Wisdom literature which, though perfectly familiar to all students of the subject, acquires a fresh interest in connexion with the question we are considering. The Wise Men of Israel, it has often been pointed out, are in a sense *Humanists*.

Their point of view is universal and individual; they do not concern themselves with the religious relations and obligations of the Israelite as such, but only with those which pertain to him as a man, living under the rule of a perfectly righteous Governor of the world. Their indifference to the positive institutions and theocratic ideals of the national religion surprises us by its consistency and apparent deliberateness. In the book of Proverbs, for example, while the divine proper name Yahweh is regularly used, the name Israel never occurs; and the distinction between Israel and the other nations finds no place whatever. In Job, Yahweh is employed in the prose framework, but (with the exception of one doubtful verse) sedulously avoided in the speeches, where it is frequently replaced by *'Ēlōāh*, which is just the Arabic name of God, *'Ilāh*. Both books ignore the whole cycle of peculiarly prophetic ideas: those, namely, which cluster round the conception of the Kingdom of God and the Messianic hope. Equally marked is their silence regarding the legal aspect of the national religion. The study of the written law is nowhere recommended; allusions to sacrifice and priesthood are not found; and the few references to points of ritual are of the most vague and cursory nature. All this shows that the Wisdom represents a tendency of mind secluded in some way from the main currents of Hebrew piety, and containing the germs of a philosophy of life applicable to mankind everywhere.

Now there are two ways in which this peculiarity of the Wisdom has been explained. Some writers, holding that the Wisdom sprang up on the soil of Judaism, maintain that the legal and national standpoint, though never expressed, is always presupposed; that the Wise Men never really look beyond the little circle of the Jewish community; and that the questions they ignore regarding the special relation between Yahweh and Israel form the silent assumption of all their thought and teaching. There is undoubtedly an element of truth in that view. The un-

swerving faith which these men had in the principle of retribution can only be accounted for by the teaching of the prophets and a rigorous training under legal conditions. Nevertheless I think the explanation is inadequate. If the written law was the source whence the Wise Men drew their ethical teaching, it is not easy to understand why they avoid referring to it and prefer to deduce every maxim from observation of life or the tradition of the sages. And this attitude is all the more remarkable when we compare the Proverbs of Solomon or the book of Job with the Wisdom of Ben-Sira. The greater part of the latter work is essentially similar to the book of Proverbs; but there is also an unmistakable vein of legalism, which manifests itself in many ways: such as the inculcation of the study of the Scriptures, the identification of the divine Wisdom with the Mosaic legislation (of which more in the next lecture); there is also a vivid sense of the unique privileges of Israel, and an ardent enthusiasm for the institutions and history of the theocracy. The natural conclusion is that originally the Wisdom was independent of legalism; and that in the book of Ben-Sira we see the two streams beginning to coalesce, and the functions of the Sage on the point of being absorbed by the scribe, the professional expounder of the written law. But if we accept that interpretation of the facts, we cannot exclude the possibility that the humanistic tendency in the Wisdom was stimulated by intercourse with men of other nations whose natural piety took a direction somewhat similar to that which we find in the Wisdom literature.

It would serve no good purpose to dwell longer on this side of the question. We may now proceed to the second branch of the inquiry, and examine some of the foreign sources of wisdom from which the Hebrew Sages are thought to have drunk.

## II.

The beginnings of Hebrew Wisdom may be traced ultimately to certain primitive instincts and habits of thought congenial to the Semitic mind. A faculty of close observation of nature and life, joined to a love of sententious and eloquent speech, constitute perhaps the mental endowment which effloresced in the primary form of written *Hokmah*, the proverbial literature. These tendencies are strongly marked amongst the Bedouin of the desert, where the tribesmen spend much of their day in the tents of the sheiks, listening to the eloquence which is bred of large experience and acute judgment. "These Orientals," says the traveller Doughty, "study little else, as they sit all day idle at the coffee in their male societies; they learn in this school of infinite human observation to speak to the heart of one another. His tales" (referring to a certain Moorish rogue named Mohammed Aly) "seasoned with saws, which are the wisdom of the unlearned, we heard for more than two months; they were never-ending. He told them so lively to the eye that they could not be bettered, and part were of his own motley experience." The great collection of Arabic proverbs by Meidani shows that this species of wisdom has been popular among the Arabs since the dawn of their literary history.

But amongst the civilized Semites of antiquity we have as yet little direct evidence of a wisdom tradition comparable to that of the Old Testament. We may cherish the hope that from the immense accumulation of unexplored cuneiform material some documents of Babylonian or Assyrian wisdom will be recovered, which may bear an instructive comparison with the gnomic poetry of the Israelites. Up to the present nothing of this kind appears to have been published, with the exception of a short collection of proverbs and riddles translated by Jäger in 1894. It is thought to have been part of a scholar's exercise-book; and

its chief importance lies in the proof it yields of a Babylonian gnostic literature of at least greater antiquity than the age of Asshur-banipal, in whose reign the extant copy is thought to have been made. With regard to the contents, the resemblance to the Hebrew proverbs seems to me to have been somewhat over-stated. There are only eighteen sayings in all; and of these a considerable proportion contain obscure astrological or mythological allusions of no interest for our present purpose. Others are conundrums, similar in character to Samson's riddle in the book of Judges. There are, however, a few which bear a family likeness to the moral maxims of the Old Testament. For example: "He who says, O that I might exercise vengeance, and more also (the common Hebrew idiom), draws from a well without water, and rubs his skin without anointing it." "If in the time of wind I consume my (store of) garlic, my heart shall be straitened in the time of rain." "Thou wentest and seizedst the property of thine enemy: the enemy came and seized thine." "The strength of a worm, . . . the drunkard is no better."—These are the most striking instances; and scanty as the harvest is, the conclusion is undoubtedly suggested that a proverbial philosophy of life was cultivated in Babylonia as well as in Israel. Looking at the age to which these maxims must be traced, it is not reasonable to deny off-hand the antiquity of some of the collections of proverbs current under the name of Solomon.

The closest parallels to the Wisdom writings of the Old Testament as yet discovered are not in the Semitic world at all, but in the didactic literature of the Egyptians. In this particular department the Egyptologists have been more fortunate than the Assyriologists. A small group of treatises has been deciphered which shows not only that a practical philosophy was extremely popular in the Nile Valley, but that its origin goes back to an almost incredibly remote period of history. The two leading documents are the Precepts of Ptah-hotep, professing to

have been written under the Fifth Dynasty, and published by Chabas under the title of "The Oldest Book in the World"; and the Maxims of the sage Aniy, addressed to his son Khonsu-hotep. Besides these we have the Book of Kaqemni (from the same papyrus as Ptah-hotep, and of very similar character); the Poem of Dauuf, a turgid and stilted composition in praise of the learned profession; a Demotic papyrus in the Louvre; and some other MSS. less important for our present purpose. Here, then, we have abundant material for a comparison with the Hebrew *Hokmah*; and if the resemblance should be such as to reveal literary dependence, there can obviously be no question as to which side has borrowed from the other.

The resemblance of this class of writings to the Jewish *Hokmah* has been noted ever since they were first discovered. One writer has ventured on the assertion that several of the Jewish maxims are translated word for word from those of Ptah-hotep (Reveillout). That, to be sure, is a gross exaggeration. There is no single Jewish proverb which can by any stretch of courtesy be described as a literal transcript of any known Egyptian original. The truth is expressed by the more guarded language of Renouf: that "these books are very similar in character to the book of Proverbs in our Bible. They inculcate the study of wisdom, the duty to parents and superiors, respect for property, the advantages of charitableness, peaceableness and content, of liberality, chastity and sobriety, of truthfulness and justice; and they show the wickedness and folly of disobedience, strife, arrogance and pride, of slothfulness, intemperance, unchastity and other vices." The general and formal similarity of the two bodies of literature is indeed very striking: I will just enumerate some of the outstanding features. (1) Three at least of the Egyptian treatises are thrown into the form of an address from a father to his son. It is very possible that this is one of the literary artifices of which at all times the Egyptian writers were prodigal, the father being really the teacher

and the son the pupil; but that does not in the least detract from the significance of the usage. It is precisely the form of address constantly recurring in the Wisdom of Ben-Sira, and employed in two sections of the book of Proverbs, where, beyond reasonable doubt, the name "father" designates the master, and "son" the disciple. (2) As in the Proverbs, the instruction consists of detached maxims, thrown loosely together, without much regard to consecutiveness of subject. As to the *form* of the sentences, it is difficult to judge from translations; but sometimes at least one detects the familiar rhythm of the parallel distich, which is the unit of gnomic poetry in Hebrew. A verse like the following: "The magnanimous man is the object of God's regard: but he who listens to his belly is scorned by his wife," is just a typical Hebrew *Mashal*. (3) A more important fact is that the precepts are addressed to a select and privileged class, who considered themselves superior to the mass of the population: viz. the youths of the literary caste whose education opened the avenue to honourable office in the service of the state. There is nothing exactly corresponding to this in the Hebrew Wisdom; though even there the instruction of the Sages seems directed mainly to young men of the leisured and well-to-do classes. It is not improbable that some of these men were candidates for employment under the foreign government (see Sir. xxxix. 4); and the conditions may well have been such as to account for the borrowing of certain rules of conduct by Jewish teachers from Egyptian models. There are, at any rate, a good many injunctions which presuppose that the pupils might have the *entrée* to the best society at home and at the court. (4) Another point that requires to be emphasized is the strongly marked *utilitarian* character of the ethical system in both cases. It has often been urged in disparagement of the morality of the Hebrew Wisdom that it incites men to the pursuit of virtue for the sake of the earthly rewards which follow it. The criticism is unjust. The Wise Men of Israel did not hold that the morality of



a course of action consisted in its tendency to produce happiness; but only that earthly happiness is the outward sign that the life which leads to it is approved by God in his providential government, and is thereby shown to be truly moral. It may be prejudice, but one can hardly resist the impression that the utilitarianism of the Egyptian ethic is much deeper-seated than that of the Hebrew Wisdom. That is to say, the Egyptian sages appear really to recommend virtuous conduct for the sake of its advantages. However that may be, the utilitarian point of view is forcibly presented in both literatures: in the Jewish writings there is a whole department of conventional etiquette and *savoir vivre*, in which no ethical principle is involved, and which must in any case have been based on foreign customs. (5) Lastly, the range of duties covered by the two sets of writings is largely identical. That appears from the words of Renouf quoted above, and still more clearly from a more exhaustive classification which I take from Amelineau: "Household economy, religion, study of ancient books, industry, drunkenness and gluttony, discretion, luxury, avoidance of faults, modesty, the end of life, slander, loquacity, generosity, education, propriety, respect for old age, occupations, courage, dissipations, vicissitudes of life, friendship and neighbourliness."

It is extremely difficult to estimate the evidential worth of general resemblances like these. Similar social conditions tend to produce similar ethical codes, and similar institutions for propagating them; and it might be held that the parallelism is not greater than was to be expected from that consideration, without the hypothesis of direct contact and dependence. Accordingly, a good deal depends on the occurrence of particular coincidences, which are not likely to have happened apart from real and direct influence of the Egyptian teaching on the Jewish. Such coincidences undoubtedly exist: whether they are sufficiently numerous to convert the improbability into an

impossibility, I do not venture to say. I can only cite a few of those I have noted: naturally they are the most striking I have been able to find; but their number could easily be multiplied.

(1) There is an interesting passage in chapters xxxviii and xxxix of Ben-Sira—too long to quote—in which the advantages of the scribe's calling are set forth in contrast with several manual occupations: the husbandman, the builder, the seal-engraver, the smith, the potter. Now the poem of Dauuf is constructed on the very same lines: it is a praise of the learned profession as contrasted with a number of handicrafts, sixteen in number, including all those of Ben-Sira, except the potter. Contempt for manual labour, however, was a characteristically Egyptian sentiment which finds no countenance from Ben-Sira: no Hebrew writer would have agreed with Ptah-hotep that "manual labour is little elevated; the inaction (of the hands) is honourable."—In the same poem of Dauuf, the son is exhorted to "set his heart after knowledge, and to love her as a mother, for there is nothing that excels knowledge,"—words recalling the terms in which the search for wisdom is inculcated in Prov. i-ix.

(2) The descriptions of the "strange woman" in Prov. ii. 16-19; v. 3-23; vii. 5-27; ix. 13-18 (?), find a close parallel in the maxims of Aniy (viii). It is thus translated by Erman: "Guard thee against the woman from without, who is not known in her city. Look not upon her . . . , know her not carnally. A deep water whose eddies one knows not is a woman who is far from her husband. 'I am gay,' she will say to thee day by day. If she has no witnesses, she will stand and lay her snares." The question has been discussed whether the *'ishshāh zārāh* in Proverbs means merely the wife of another man, or a foreign courtesan, like the Greek *Hetairai*. To judge from the Egyptian maxim, she may have combined both characters: she is at once a stranger in the city where she dwells, and a wife far from her husband.

(3) "When thou sittest at table with a magnate, consider well what is before thee. Thou puttest a knife to thy throat if thou be a gluttonous person. Do not hanker after his delicacies; they are a deceitful enjoyment." So we read in Prov. xxiii. 1-3. In Ptah-hotep: "If thou art among the persons seated at meat in the house of a greater man than thyself, take that which he gives thee bowing to the ground. Regard that which is placed before thee but point not at it; regard it not frequently: he is a blameworthy person who departs from this rule." The interest of this striking parallel is that it shows that in both countries a code of table-etiquette formed part of the instruction of the Wise Men. There are many similar passages in the book of Ben-Sira: a curious specimen will be found in chap. xxxiv. 12 ff., where the author enters into details that throw a strange light on the feasting customs of the time. Wisdom of this nature is little likely to have been the native product of Jewish society or of Jewish religion.

(4) Talebearing, so often denounced in the Proverbs and Ben-Sira, is discountenanced in these terms: "Do not repeat any extravagance of language; do not listen to it; it is a thing that has escaped from a hasty mouth. If it is repeated, look, without hearing it, towards the earth; say nothing in regard to it" (P.-H. xxiii). And again: "What thine eye sees in thy house keep silence about; and do not tell it abroad to another, lest it become an offence worthy of death when it is heard" (Aniy, vii).

(5) Severity in family discipline is insisted on in the Proverbs, and still more forcibly in Ben-Sira. In the Egyptian Wisdom we have such rules as the following: "Bring up a son who shall be pleasing to God. If he conforms, &c. . . . But if he conducts himself ill and transgresses thy wish . . . strike him on the mouth in return" (P.-H. xii). "Discipline in the house is life: use reprimand and thou shalt find thyself better for it(?)" (Aniy, xx).

(6) Readers of the Proverbs have possibly been surprised at the prominence given to the "faithful messenger" (e. g. x. 26; xiii. 17, &c.). It is not apparent why the ordinary Jewish burgher came to have so many important messages to transmit, or how he was so dependent on the accuracy of his subordinate. If we could suppose that the origin of these rules was the code of the Egyptian civil service, the matter might be elucidated by such a precept as this: "If thou art one of those who bring the messages of one great man to another, conform thyself exactly to that wherewith he has charged thee; perform for him the commission as he has enjoined thee. Beware of altering," &c.

(7) The Egyptian Wisdom, like the Hebrew, is profoundly impressed with the dangers of the tongue, the value of wise speech, and on the whole the advantage of silence. "The ruin of a man is in his tongue." "Guard thee against sinning in words; let them not be wounding: a reprehensible thing in the bosom of a man is the malicious loquacity which never rests."—The "soft answer that turneth away wrath" appears in Aniy (lviii): "Speak gently to him who speaks with vehemence; that is the remedy for pacifying his heart."

These examples must suffice. They might, as I have said, be multiplied, if one were to take note of every coincidence of thought and expression; but if those quoted do not make the hypothesis of a common origin plausible, I do not think that any number of less decisive parallels would produce conviction. The only other question is, whether or at what time such communication as is presupposed between Egypt and Palestine was probable. Now, if there was any period more than another when the influence of the one country on the other was natural, and almost inevitable, it was the century or more during which the Jews were ruled directly from Alexandria under the Ptolemies. The son of Sira must have spent the best part of his life under that dominion; and we may be quite sure

that Egypt was one of the foreign countries in which he claims to have travelled. Nothing, therefore, could be less surprising than that his mind should have been impressed by the hoary wisdom of the Egyptian sages, or that he should have been a diligent student of their writings. The book of Proverbs is no doubt older, though how much older it is impossible to say. It is quite possible, indeed probable, that the final redaction of the book preceded the date of Ben-Sira by much less than a century, so that any traces of Egyptian influence which appear there might belong to an earlier phase of the same intercourse which had become more frequent in the days of Ben-Sira. In these circumstances, the nebulous hypothesis of Gunkel,—that the origin of the proverbial literature is to be sought in Egypt, and that the Egyptian wisdom was transmitted to Israel through the medium of Arabia and Edom,—seems to me altogether unnecessary.

I have said nothing as yet about the book of Ecclesiastes, which is *the* book of the Old Testament with regard to which the question of external influences has been most keenly debated. The discussions, however, have turned almost exclusively on the possible acquaintance of the writer with the systematic teaching of the Greek philosophical schools. On that large and difficult inquiry I do not propose to enter here; but I may be permitted in closing this lecture to advert to some interesting parallels between Ecclesiastes and the class of Egyptian writings from which I have been quoting.

I begin with a pair of casual coincidences. (1) Take first the well-known verses which contain the preacher's curiously moderate recommendation of religious duties, v. 1 ff. (E. V.). "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, for it is better to draw near to hear than to offer a fool's sacrifice . . . Be not rash with thy mouth, and do not utter a word precipitately before God; for God is in heaven . . . When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it . . . Better it is that thou shouldest

not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay . . .” To this there are two analogies in the maxims of Aniy: “The sanctuary of God abhors (noisy manifestations?). Pray humbly with a loving heart, all the words of which are uttered in secret. He will protect thee in thy affairs, he will listen to thy words, he will accept thine offerings.” And again: “In making thine oblation to God, beware of what he abhors . . . Exaggerate not the liturgical prescriptions; it is forbidden to give more than what is prescribed” (Renouf). (2) The sequel of the above passage in Qoheleth is as follows: “Suffer not thy mouth to bring thee into condemnation, and say not before the angel that it was an inadvertence . . .” As usually explained, the “angel” means the priest; and the case supposed is that of a man pleading off from the fulfilment of a vow on the ground that he had made it inconsiderately. Professor Dillon finds that interpretation unsatisfactory; and thinks the underlying allusion must be to some notion of an angel of death who appears suddenly to a man, and whom the man tries to evade by some pretext. I confess I do not see very well how that exegesis can be carried through; but if it could, an illuminating parallel would be found again in the maxims of Aniy: “When thy messenger comes to take thee, let him find one who is ready. Surely thou wilt not have time to speak, for when he comes he will present himself suddenly. Do not say, I am a young man . . . &c.” The point is that the messenger, who is evidently the angel of death, is spoken of quite generally as “thy messenger,” showing that the idea was firmly rooted in popular thought.

Of far greater weight than these isolated coincidences is a profound similarity between the temper of the book and one of the persistent strains of Egyptian meditation. The combination of a cheerful abandonment to the pleasures and occupations of life with a gloomy resignation to the fate of death is a characteristic note of the teaching of Qoheleth, which is all the more remarkable because the

very same sentiments seemed to the later author of the Wisdom of Solomon the essence of impiety. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thine head lack ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity which he hath given thee under the sun; for that is thy portion in life and in thy labour wherein thou labourest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Yea, if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth . . . , &c." Now, this is precisely the mood which so frequently finds expression in the tombs of Egypt, and whose influence on the life of the ancient people has struck all observers from Herodotus downwards. Here are a few illustrations: "Possess what thou hast in the joy of thy heart. What thou hast not, obtain it by work. It is profitable for a man to eat his own bread; God grants this to whosoever honours him" (Leiden papyrus). "Fulfil thy desire while thou livest. Put oils upon thy head, clothe thyself with fine linen . . . yield to thy desire—fulfil thy desire with thy good things whilst thou art upon earth, according to the dictation of thy heart. The day will come to thee when one hears not the voice—when the one who is at rest hears not their voices. Feast in tranquillity; seeing that there is no one who carries his goods with him." "Make a happy day, O divine one (?). Let odours and ointments stand before thy nostrils, garlands and lotus-flowers for thy shoulders . . . Let song and music be before thy face, and leave behind thee all evil cares. Mind thee only of joys, till cometh the day of pilgrimage when we draw near the land that loveth silence." "O brother, cease

not to drink, to eat, to be drunken, to practise love, to make a happy day, to follow thy heart day and night; let no grief affect thy heart: what are the years, how numerous soever they be which one passes on the earth.' The feeling is admirably rendered in the following lines of a modern poet:—

O swart musician, time and fame are fleet,  
Brief all delight, and youth's feet fain to fly!  
Pipe on in peace! To-morrow must we die?  
What matter if our life to-day be sweet!  
Soon, soon, the silver paper-reeds that sigh  
Along the Sacred River will repeat  
The echo of the dark-stoled bearers' feet,  
Who carry you, with wailing, where must lie  
Your swathed and mummied body, by and by,  
In perfumed darkness with the grains of wheat.

The preacher did not learn that strain from the songs of Zion; may he not have borrowed it from Egyptian sources?

JOHN SKINNER.